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Yrjo Grohn wins lifetime achievement award

By Carly Hodes

Grohn

Dr. Yrjo Grohn, professor of epidemiology at Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine, has been honored with a lifetime achievement award from the Association for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (AVEPM) for his work in veterinary epidemiology and preventive medicine. As the awardee, he developed the program for a symposium that featured topics related to his work, which uses mathematical modeling to understand the spread of infectious diseases and optimize food production systems.

The symposium honoring Grohn's work took place in Chicago in December 2013.

Grohn has enriched the veterinary epidemiology arena with research shared through a large number of frequently cited publications, including a paper in the renowned journal Nature in fall 2013. He is widely known for his pioneering work on mixed models and dynamic programming. He has received continuous U.S. Department of Agriculture funding while simultaneously holding a major National Institutes of Health grant in the area of public health. A highly regarded educator, he helped lead a series of workshops taught at Cornell and at the triennial International Symposium of Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics in countries throughout the world.

He has served on more than 30 Ph.D. committees and supervised numerous postdoctoral research fellows. In 2007 he was honored as the presenter of the Gareth Davis Lecture at the foremost European veterinary epidemiology society.

At the symposium, Martin Wiedmann, professor of food science at Cornell, discussed the state of research in prevention and control of foodborne and zoonotic diseases. Former postdoctoral associates Renata Ivanek and Cristina Lanzas, who are now professors, described the transition from lab research to mathematical modeling.

Grohn's colleague Ynte Hein Schukken, professor of epidemiology and herd health at Cornell, presented on how models process the data that feeds into them, and Danish economist Anders Kristenson discussed the question of how biological models can aid economic optimization and decision-making in farms and other contexts.

Grohn closed the symposium by painting the big picture, describing how smaller models can combine to create larger-scale models that could begin mapping out the world's incredibly complex modern food systems and create massive models that could inform strategies for preventing and intervening in foodborne disease outbreaks, a subject he hopes to study for years to come.

Carly Hodes '10 is a communication specialist at the College of Veterinary Medicine.

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